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CORPORATIONS AND SOCIETY

The Social Anthropology of Collective Action

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Contents

lineage theory, just as it was of kinship studies, before lineage theory opened the doors to their political and other implications by systematic study. For if lineage theory conceives of lineage and political relations identically in specialized conditions, and restricts its analysis to these, then it has only a closed system to study, and the problems of closure, limits, development, and change, which faced earlier studies of kinship by the terminological method, alone remain to indicate the inadequacy of the analysis, and to suggest further lines of development by the extension of these lineage studies to their widest field of reference.

These considerations have been expressed in segmentary theory in terms of the problem of lineage form and formation, certain aspects of which have been discussed above. We suggested there that the reduction of the lineage conditionally to locality or familial groupings was an inadequate answer to the problems raised; and indeed, that the problems would have little significance if the frame of reference within which the study of lineage systems is made was extended through a general theory of governmental processes and forms. We have attempted to outline one possible approach to this problem. It may very well prove inadequate; but even so, the general point remains. Lineages, like kinship systems, cannot be explained in terms of themselves. Their examination and analysis is only fruitful in a wider frame of reference with comparative implications, and proceeding by the comparative method. We have suggested that one important aspect of this examination must be the study of the variations of myths and ideologies which correspond to similarities or differences in the organization of governmental systems and processes, as these in turn show variability in the interrelation of political and administrative functions, units and systems. Perhaps this line of investigation may lead to the type of comparative work which proceeds by the study of co-variations, and may yield a continuous typology of governmental systems, in which kinship and lineage may find a fuller analysis, and those 'relations between relations' which Evans-Pritchard suggests that we seek, may be traced.

2.

Anthropological Studies of Politics

My purpose here is briefly to review anthropological studies of government and politics, to identify the main interests of anthropologists in this field, to say something about their methods and conceptual schemes, and to indicate some problems and findings of these inquiries. For this exposition it is convenient to adopt a historical approach. In conclusion I shall illustrate the current position by discussing two examples.

1.

Anthropology emerged in the eighteenth century as an empirical reaction to deductive social and political philosophy. From the beginning, its relations with politics were thus very close. The forerunners were such men as Vico, Turgot, Montesquieu and David Hume, who were dissatisfied with the speculative methods to which social philosophy was then wedded. For more than a century, jurists and political philosophers had based their theories of law and government on such fictions as the state of nature and the social contract; their methods of argument being speculative, their theories differed with the creator's conception of these fictive states; and thus the same postulates might support philosophies which favoured absolutism, oligarchy or plebiscitarian democracy. However these philosophers might disagree in their conclusions, they all regarded society and the state of nature as polar opposites. Society they identified with order, government and law, while the state of nature was identified by the absence of these conditions, and thus of any durable forms of human association above the level of the family. The realities to which this philosophical contrast referred were the observable differences between centralized political systems and the acephalous or stateless communities which were then the subject of reports by missionaries, traders and explorers. To Vico, Montesquieu, Turgot and Hume, these philosophical fictions were inadequate substitutes for the information on simpler peoples which was then becoming available, and which seemed likely to provide a more reliable guide to the condition of man in the state of nature than the speculations of rival philosophical schools. Although some of these exotic societies lacked discernible institutions of government and

law, they were evidently durable and self-regulating. Following Montesquieu, Adam Ferguson, John Millar, Lord Kames and others made systematic studies of this ethnographic literature and of the historical records of early Eurasiatic peoples, to isolate such general regularities as an inductive analysis of these data would permit.

In his *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu had tried to formulate universal relations which hold between legal systems and their social and ecological environments. In this inquiry, he employed materials from simple societies with rudimentary political institutions as well as from those which were more organized. In his exposition Montesquieu tried to demonstrate the interdependence of such social institutions as law, religion, economy, with one another and with their ecological framework. Using historical materials, Vico identified a series of phases through which he thought all dynamic societies would necessarily pass, and he also tried to show how legal institutions were moulded by the history of their social context. The Scottish anthropologists sought to combine the approaches of Vico and Montesquieu. In examining the range and variety of human society, they also tried to delimit stages of its development, and to discover how the various parts of society interacted with each other to generate this development. Much of their interest focused on the differences between the societies with centralized political institutions and those acephalous communities which philosophers regarded as forms in a state of nature.

By the end of the eighteenth century, this phase of anthropology had reached its close. Competing theories of social development and causation were in the air. The new discipline had clearly separated from philosophy, its parent, and though retaining an interest in certain problems which were common to both, it employed different methods and data to yield theories of quite different types. For some early anthropologists, intellectual and moral forces determined the rate and course of social development; for others, technological and economic factors were more concrete and pervasive; for some, innate racial capacities regulated cultural development and differentiation.

Thus from the start, anthropology has been identified with the study of human variety and its development; and in government and politics, it was especially concerned with the study of those simpler peoples whose modes of life and organization corresponded most closely to the philosophical conceptions of the state of nature. By studies which range from these most rudimentary societies to include the most complex modern or historical states, anthropologists still seek to isolate the generic features and conditions of social life, to identify its principal forms and varieties, to demonstrate the course of its development. In addition, following the example of Montesquieu, we seek to trace the relations which hold between various aspects of social life, and to determine the influence which differences of habitat, population size, density, or technology

exercise in similar or different types of social and cultural organization.

Given these interests, it would seem an essential first task for anthropologists to determine the variety of social and cultural types. However, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was no tradition of anthropological field study, and the scholars of those days carried out their investigations at home, with the field reports available to them. In constructing their social typologies, they first emphasized differences in modes of livelihood and political organization, and then employed these taxonomies to facilitate theories of social development and evolution. We are still indebted to the evolutionary anthropologists of the late nineteenth century for the gross classifications and developmental schema that we casually employ. Of these evolutionary theorists, Sir Henry Maine and Lewis H. Morgan are of special interest to us here.[1]

Maine was a historical jurist who opposed the doctrines of natural law, and argued that even in simple societies which lacked courts and formal administration, primitive man still knew government and law. To support this thesis, Maine employed the legal concepts of corporations aggregate and sole. He argued that in some societies, corporate groups based on kinship and having jural capacities were the dominant social forms. In societies with chiefs and a centralized administration, corporations sole or offices tended to become prominent. Maine went on to distinguish two great classes of society, one of which was static and archaic, while the other was progressive and modern. To Maine, these two types of societies differed most sharply in the principles which regulated social relations within them. In the static, archaic society, conditions of status prescribed the form and content of social relations; and among these prescriptions, the membership obligations of the corporate kinship groups in which the populations were organized were especially important. By contrast, in modern progressive societies, under the protection of supervisory corporations sole, individuals are free from such restrictions and may regulate their relations at will by contracts based on mutual interest. For ancient Rome, Maine went on to show how the prescriptions of corporate kin groups were replaced by contractual relations, as the lineage lost its jural autonomy to new judicial and executive offices through which the public affairs of the citizens were regulated. In his view, the earliest social groups were familial units headed by patriarchs whose joint decisions also regulated community affairs. Maine offered no formal definitions of government or law, but sought to demonstrate their substance in primitive conditions. He made no effort to identify any single factor as the determinant of social development, and also confined his inquiries to the early patriarchal societies of Indo-European speaking peoples. He therefore

1. Maine (1905); Morgan (1875); see Gierke (1960).

fore presented a theory of historical evolution limited to a particular case.

The American anthropologist Lewis Morgan advanced a global theory based on his field work and studies of kinship terminologies. He began by distinguishing two 'plans of government', a 'gentile' plan based on unilineal descent, and a 'political' one based on territorial organization and the transmission of property. In addition, he held that the primordial human aggregates were organized purely on the basis of sex and age, without any clear distinctions of kinship or residence. At this primeval level of social development, both government and 'political' organization are absent, in Morgan's view. Their technology being rudimentary in the extreme, for subsistence these populations followed nomadic routines of hunting and gathering. According to Morgan, their promiscuous mating habits were reflected in kinship terminologies of the Hawaiian type. With the passage of generations, relations of kinship were recognized and descent was traced initially through women. On this basis matrilineal descent groups emerged as durable social units. These matrilineages regulated their interrelations by rules of exogamy, post-marital residence, adoption, feud, burial rites and the like; and it is this type of organization, which is characteristic of segmentary lineage societies lacking central institutions, that Morgan identifies as 'gentile' government. For such aggregates, he reserves the term *societas*, in contradistinction to *civitas*, which he translates as the state, and identifies with 'political' organization. Only when the unit of public organization is a territorial group — village, deme, or ward — does Morgan concede the presence of political organization.

Besides the original promiscuous aggregate from which the matrilineal descent groups emerged, Morgan postulates further changes in kinship institutions which give rise to property-holding patrilineages. These, being localized, are easily absorbed in territorial aggregates, thereby giving rise to the state. Thus Morgan redefined Maine's stateless societies based on kinship and status as pre-political aggregates by developing special notions of government and politics. As the determinant of this evolutionary process, Morgan points to technology and property, the development of which he regards as prerequisite for monogamy and for the localization of kinship groups. Thus he constructed a universal scheme of social evolution based on a hypothetical succession of types of social organization, each of which represented a distinct combination of social, economic and technical traits. Since this evolutionary theory rested on his kinship analysis, the immediate effect of Morgan's work was to concentrate attention on the study of kinship and marriage, at the expense of government and politics. In the furore of kinship controversy, Morgan's scheme of political evolution virtually lapsed from notice, though Engels incorporated it wholesale into the Marxist doctrine. Recently, this aspect of Morgan's work has been

the subject of a critical discussion by Isaac Schapera in the light of materials on native societies in South Africa.[2]

Morgan was not the only global evolutionist whose theory required an account of the origin of the state. Herbert Spencer also shared this problem. Spencer identified processes of social growth with the serial compounding of social aggregates. By these means, units would increase in scale and internal complexity as the Spencerian doctrine of evolution required. First, two small autonomous societies would be brought under the rule of a single chief; then this simply compound society would be absorbed into a larger, more heterogeneous unit, generally through conquest; and so the process would continue, until large-scale units with identifiable administrative organization emerged. Thus for Spencer the state originates in the context of conquest and consolidation, and is essential to further evolutionary growth. These views were adopted by Ludwig Gumplowicz and Franz Oppenheimer, who also held that the state originated in conquest, though they made little attempt to define the state except by centralized domination of a territory. This theory was later the subject of a critical study by Robert Lowie, who also took the notion of the state for granted. Lowie argued that 'states' may have emerged from men's societies, such as the Crow Indian military societies, age grades, and the like, without any conquests.[3]

Few of these early theorists had any experience of field research. They generally relied on reports of uneven quality and coverage by travellers and others. Since these accounts were usually incomplete, the scholars concerned to analyse them were unable to see how these societies really worked, and the data encouraged them to speculate about historical connections and evolution. In reaction against such historical researches based on imperfect materials, some anthropologists decided to study contemporary societies as going concerns at first hand. To this new tradition of field work, Bronislaw Malinowski made the greatest contribution. He showed how rewarding it was for the anthropologist to live among the people he was studying, to conduct his researches in the native language, and to participate as fully as possible in the daily life of the people. The materials which Malinowski gathered by these methods in the Trobriand Islands of Melanesia also served to dispel a large number of earlier speculations.[4] In addition, Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown, who had studied the Andaman Islanders in 1906, between them trained a number of students in these methods, and encouraged them to study the contemporary life of simpler peoples. With some additions and changes of emphasis, these field methods are still a basic resource of social anthropology today. Their reliability is

2. Schapera (1956).
3. Lowie (1926); Apthorpe (1959).
4. Malinowski (1959).

evident from the abundance of significant studies they have yielded.

An important feature of this anthropological approach to field work is its emphasis on the interconnection of social and cultural facts. Whether we use conceptual frameworks based on culture or society, the anthropologist regards the whole round of the people's life as a system of interdependent phases and parts. With this orientation, he is obliged to investigate all the recurrent features of social life, to determine their interrelation and relative autonomy. In this way an investigation of the political organization of a simple society presumes a thorough knowledge of the social ecology, the economy, the people's historical traditions, their values, beliefs and modes of thought, their kinship and local organization, marriage arrangements, forms of property and other social institutions. Though the anthropologist distinguishes these various facets of social life as economic, kinship, ritual, political and ecological systems by reference to such criteria as the mode of livelihood, maintenance of social order, or relations with the unseen, his basic assumption that these various sub-systems together constitute a viable, self-perpetuating form of social life enjoins careful investigation of their interconnections and mutual influences. Yet, although he assumes some interdependence among these elements, the anthropologist can hardly know in advance what form or intensity these relations may take; thus the primary significance of his assumption that the society does form a system of some sort is that it requires him to investigate the elements of social life in a systematic manner.

For this investigation, the social anthropologist employs a number of organizing concepts. Having identified the principal types of social group, he seeks to analyse their inner organizations as structures of status and role. The various positions which constitute these group structures are defined by rights, privileges and obligations, through which they are related to each other to constitute the group. These relations are maintained or changed by a variety of mechanisms, including sanctions and the exercise of power, which the anthropologist seeks to identify and analyse. Such groups are generally identified with particular functions and resources by charters which legitimate their organization and endow their structure and operations with authority. These charters also set the framework of relations between groups of similar and differing type.

Often the anthropologist will find that a single type of grouping discharges many institutional functions which the society requires; for different activities such a group may also be subdivided into smaller units, as Bushman bands are composed of separate households. In such multifunctional groupings, the structure of social relations contains a number of built-in mechanisms for order and control. If two kinsmen are obliged to co-operate in economic and ritual activities, their differences in one sphere tend to be offset by their mutual dependence in another. Sometimes, however, these

multiplex relations generate such tensions that their maintenance becomes difficult, and they break down. The anthropologist is interested in these many-stranded relations, to determine the ways in which their various elements support or obstruct one another, and the types of situation in which conflicts develop or dissolve. In this way, he seeks to identify the dynamic conditions which underlie the social order, and to document the forms and principles of social differentiation within as well as between groups.

In studying political organization among simpler peoples with a limited social differentiation, the anthropologist has to make careful distinctions between the political order and other forms and phases of social order. Although these distinctions may only be analytic, they are none the less important. In some societies, political and jural relations are submerged in activities which have quite different bases and purposes; for example, bonds of kinship may regulate relations of property, marriage, collective responsibility, compensation and the like. In this case, the institutions of kinship may embrace the political order and extend beyond it; and the greater the role of kinship, the more the social order depends upon it for its form, span and scope. In similar fashion, ritual beliefs and organization embody a certain order, which may be highly relevant to the analysis of political organization. Such conditions require us to proceed with caution when we distinguish the specifically political aspects of social organization, and I shall try to say something about this later.

By comparative analysis, the anthropologist seeks to clarify his concepts, to develop hypotheses, and to formulate models of social structure and process which may then be tested in field researches of other societies. He seeks also to develop generalizations about social processes which later study may refine and extend. Though traditionally concerned with simple societies, the anthropologist seeks a theory which may apply to all; and for several years, anthropologists have engaged in field studies of complex industrial systems.

In 1940, the first generation of social anthropologists schooled in these methods and orientations by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown collaborated in a joint volume (on *African Political Systems*) which marked the start of modern comparative studies of politics and government in anthropology.[5] In reviewing their data on these African polities, Meyer Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, who edited this volume, observed that

three types of political systems can be distinguished. Firstly, there are those very small societies ... in which even the largest political unit embraces a group of people, all of whom are united to one another by ties of kinship, so that political relations are coterminous with kinship relations, and the political structure and kinship organization are completely fused. Secondly, there are societies in which a lineage structure is the framework of the political system, there being a precise

5. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940*b*); see also Fortes (1945, 1949).

co-ordination between the two, so that they are consistent with each other, though each remains distinct and autonomous in its own sphere. Thirdly, there are societies in which an administrative organization is the framework of the political structure. The numerical and territorial range of a political system would vary according to the type to which it belongs.[6]

In several respects this recent typology reproduces those of Morgan and Durkheim; and its developmental implications are also clear. But there is an important difference in the use to which these models are put. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard have shown us how to investigate the 'stateless' societies, to determine their properties and organization.

The volume just cited assembled field reports of very high quality on the political organization of eight African societies. Five of these societies were territorial chiefdoms, while the remainder lacked chiefs or central agencies of any sort. Within either category there were important variations; but the differences between the categories were overriding. *African Political Systems* was followed by substantial monographs in which the institutional mechanisms on which these acephalous polysegmentary societies depended for social order and cohesion were carefully documented and analysed. In consequence, we now know much more about the conditions which underlie these uncentralized societies than was the case in 1940; and this knowledge may be applicable to the analysis of other multi-centric political systems, such as the network of international relations, the political alignments of international firms, or cleavages within and between the ranks of labour and capital. As this area is theoretically significant I shall discuss some features of acephalous organization later.

One weakness in the analysis of Fortes and Evans-Pritchard was the typology on which their argument hung. This was inadequate even for the data then available. In establishing their trichotomy of African polities, these writers ignored certain African forms of acephalous organization, such as the age-set systems of the Nilo-Hamites and the village societies of Eastern Nigeria. They also ignored numerous cases in which segmentary lineage and state organizations were combined, as for example among the Ashanti, the Bemba or the Yoruba. In the simplest societies, they also tended to over-emphasize kinship at the expense of locality and other ties.

A series of timely papers by Paula Brown, Bernardi, Daryll Forde, and by Evans-Pritchard himself sought to modify and refine this typology.[7] So did a number of monographs. In 1954 John Barnes described the simultaneous processes of fission and expansion in Ngoni conquest states, through which residential segments hived off from the parent body at fairly regular intervals, in response to

6. Fortes and Evans-Pritchard (1940*b*), pp. 6, 7.
7. Evans-Pritchard (1940*a*, 1940*b*, 1948); Bernardi (1952); P. Brown (1951); Forde (1939*b*, 1950*a*, 1961, 1962).

internal strains and external opportunities. Here the segmentary units were centralized communities rather than lineages.[8] Two years later Aidan Southall identified the segmentary state as an intermediate political form in which chiefs having identical powers and drawn from a common lineage administered personal domains, though in a loose association which emphasized hierarchical allegiance.[9] Among the Busoga of Uganda, Lloyd Fallers observed three distinctive modes of political authority: clientage, lineage, and Western bureaucratic patterns; and analysed their interrelation.[10] On his observations, he argued that relations of lineage and clientage tended to conflict with one another, and that both these types of alignment were inconsistent with the requisites of bureaucratic organization. He advanced the hypothesis that 'existence in a society of corporate lineages with institutions of the state type makes for strain and instability',[11] and concluded that 'societies with hierarchical centralized political systems incorporate the Western type of civil service structure with less strain and instability than do societies having other types of political system, e.g., segmentary ones'.[12] These generalizations hark back to the typological contrasts drawn by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard but also to Max Weber's theory of authority systems. Being significant and clearly stated, they have been the subject of comparative studies by Audrey Richards, Raymond Apthorpe, and others.[13]

Among the Kachins of Highland Burma, Edmund Leach analysed political instability in terms of conflicting principles and ideologies of rank and chieftaincy on the one hand, and lineage solidarity and egalitarianism on the other.[14] In a number of incisive essays, Max Gluckman has also concentrated on the conditions and functions of conflict in political systems of differing type; and he has argued that under certain conditions, such oppositions may foster political integration by increasing participation.[15]

2.

It will be clear from this summary that the anthropological approach to political studies has been primarily empirical. Such theories as it embraces hardly merit the name. The most inclusive are simply unverifiable evolutionary speculations. To date, anthropologists have made little attempt to clarify their conceptions of the issues under study. Perhaps this has not seemed necessary, because

8. Barnes (1954).
9. Southall (1956).
10. Fallers (1956).
11. ibid., p. 17.
12. ibid., p. 242.
13. Richards (1960); Apthorpe (1959).
14. Leach (1954).
15. Gluckman (1955, 1963).

we have been working with such gross differences as those between centralized and uncentralized societies. Yet even here, our terms reveal some imprecision of thought; we tend to regard acephalous, uncentralized and stateless societies as identical, and to contrast these as a single category with centralized societies or states. Yet it seems clear that many acephalous societies are at least partially centralized; and if eleventh-century France or the Holy Roman Empire of the sixteenth century are representative states, we should not lightly assume that all states are centralized. The simplicity and convenience of this dichotomy has enabled us to ignore the problem of defining centralization.

A similar tendency is evident in anthropological discussions of political organization. This term has many connotations, not all of which are identical. Yet, instead of analysing these notions to clarify their own ideas, anthropologists generally seek to identify political organization by one or two concrete criteria, which seem sufficiently general to apply to all types of society. As we have seen, it is an anthropological credo inherited from the eighteenth century that all societies have political organization, but when anthropologists reserve this term for the societal level, they fail to consider the political organization of units within the society. They differ also in the criteria by which they define the political organization.

Thus Radcliffe-Brown, in his Preface to the book edited by Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, defines political organization as

that aspect of the total organization which is concerned with the control and regulation of the use of physical force ... A political system ... involves a set of relations between territorial groups ... In dealing with political systems, therefore, we are dealing with law on the one hand and with war on the other. But there are certain institutions such as regulated vengeance, which come between the two ... In seeking to define the political structure in a simple society, we have to look for a territorial community which is united by the rule of law ... But ... in some societies such a political community is indeterminate.[16]

However, these notions are circular at base. Radcliffe-Brown's two criteria, 'the organized exercise of coercive authority', and 'the political community' merely serve to define one another. Where there is no machinery for 'the maintenance or establishment of social order within a territorial community by the organized exercise of authority', we should therefore conclude that there is neither a political community nor political organization. But since he regards political organization as a universal feature of social life, Radcliffe-Brown tactfully sets this difficulty aside.

Reacting against this definition of the political community in terms of force, Professor Schapera goes to the other extreme. In his view, political organization is 'that aspect of the total organization which is concerned with the establishment and maintenance of

16. Radcliffe-Brown (1940), pp. xiv-xxiii.

internal co-operation and external independence'. This definition presents us with the problem of delimiting the various mechanisms involved in the 'establishment and maintenance of internal co-operation', since this may take many forms, not all of which are equally relevant to the analysis of political structure. However, on this subject Schapera says that 'we have to study in fact the whole system of the communal leadership, and all the functions (as well as the powers) of the leaders; and in this context such activities as the organization of religious ceremonies or collective hunts or the concentration and redistribution of wealth are as relevant as the administration of justice'.[17] Thus Schapera correctly requires that we undertake a detailed field study of the relations between political and other social institutions; but in place of political analysis, he seems to recommend an ethnographic inventory of all practices that foster internal co-operation, from toilet training to mortuary rites, on the assumption that they are all equally relevant. Thus, starting with the conception of government as one aspect of the social organization, he assimilates almost all the rest to it. None the less, by confining his emphasis to co-operation, he seems to exclude the study of internal conflicts, instability and structural change, though these are likely to be central to the political process.

However, on either of these definitions, we should have to conclude that many acephalous societies lack political organization, in so far as they contain a number of relatively discrete communities, within or between which there is neither established co-operation, nor procedures for the regulation of force. Acephalous societies having these features include for example the Murngin, Bwamba and the Vugusu. Lucy Mair, in her recent book, also discusses this point in some detail for the Nuer.[18]

Despite their apparent differences, these two definitions really rest on the same criterion; both identify political organization with the rule of law, and neither specifies clearly what this involves. Although they are closely related, it seems preferable to separate the polity and law initially, so that we may examine each on its own terms. I shall try to show how they are related later.

In specifying concrete criteria of political organization, these definitions arbitrarily limit political organization to the level of the society at the same time that they restrict its scope. But since many forms of political organization are concerned neither with the maintenance of co-operation nor with the regulation of force, we still need a definition which is simultaneously applicable to all societies, and to all levels of social organization. On general grounds it seems likely that such a definition should not be too specific. It should not seek to predetermine the objects of political action.

17. Schapera (1956), p. 218.
18. Mair (1962), pp. 46-7, 104.

3.

The common element in such terms as political organization, political action, political system, political unit or process, is the term political. If we ask, to what does this refer, what is its subject matter, only one answer is possible: namely, public affairs, whatever these may be. A political organization is thus the organization which regulates these public affairs. Just how the public is defined and what are its affairs, we can determine empirically. But comparative studies show that publics have certain features. They are enduring units, presumed to be perpetual. They have clear identities, boundaries, and membership; an exclusive body of interests and affairs; and the autonomy, organization and procedures necessary to manage these. Thus, publics differ from categories and other aggregates in their internal organization, their continuity, their positive modes of action, and their self-regulating capacities. Such units are always corporate groups.

In an acephalous society based on localized lineages, each quite distinct and autonomous, the affairs of any one lineage will only concern members of other lineages in specific cases. Thus, while many public affairs of each lineage are purely internal, others involve its relations to units of similar type. Societies organized on such a basis derive their order from the fact that in inter-lineage relations, each collectivity is treated as a single indivisible unit. From this derives the principle of the collective responsibility of lineage members for one another, and from this the tendencies towards feud, collective compensation, ritual pollution and purification of an offender's lineage, collective tenure of a given site, collective interests in the daughters and wives of the lineage, in its cult, etc. Because these lineage corporations are durable and identical in character, the distribution of rights and obligations between them is symmetrical and predictable; and the social structure based on these units has continuity over time as well as uniformity in space. The individual, as Maine observed, is subjected to their corporate regulation; but in return, he derives all his jural and political status from membership in one of these units.

In such a case, the various publics which together constitute the society each represent a distinct unit of internal order; and the total aggregate, being uncentralized, depends for its unity on the replication of identical corporate forms, each characterized by the same properties, requisites and modes of external relation. In this sense, one may correctly describe an acephalous society as exhibiting a common law, even though this notion becomes ambiguous if the constituent lineages engage in feud and hostile relations. However, if we postpone this problem of law for a while, and define government as the regulation of public affairs, then, despite its decentralized

character, there is little difficulty in showing that the acephalous society exhibits government, even though it does not exhibit societal co-operation or societal regulation of force.

Let us look a little closer at our model. The lineage group is often defined by a genealogical tradition which lays down its main sub-divisions in terms of ancestry and descent. Each lineage may thus contain a number of segments, and these may be subdivided likewise on similar lines. These segments are defined as separate publics for different issues, and all segments of the same order administer a similar set of affairs for their members. While the affairs reserved to minor segments of a lineage are generally familial, and mainly involve domestic rights, external affairs of the total lineage mobilize its entire membership directly or indirectly, especially if any modification in its relations with other lineages is involved. The distribution of land, the siting of houses, allocation of inheritance rights in widows, farms or crops, domestic order and subsistence — these functions are usually reserved to the segments of lower order. The lineage is also linked through its parts to other lineages in the society by ties of marriage, by the non-lineal kinship of its members, by local contiguity, by ritual alliance, and by traditions of common descent and origin. In some societies, lineages are grouped in phratries or moieties, and subjected to common rules of exogamy; in other societies lineages may be linked by patterns of marriage alliance. Among the Tallensi of Northern Ghana, who were studied by Meyer Fortes, each inclusive lineage is also associated with two sets of other lineages for ritual purposes; for the earth cult it participates in one congregation, for the cult of the external *boyar* it belongs to another. While each of these congregations represents a distinct public, the lineages which constitute it are also distinct publics themselves; and, by virtue of these dispersed ties of ritual alliance, each lineage belongs to a series of societal networks which may provide assistance when needed, or mediators as disputes arise.

A rather different type of organization is found among the Yakö of the Cross River area in South-eastern Nigeria, where every individual belongs to two different lineages. By virtue of descent from his father, he belongs to his father's patrilineage and lives with them in their part of the village. But through his mother he is also a member of her matrilineage, and they will inherit all his movable goods and will demand redress if he suffers injury. He may not marry either his matrilineal or patrilineal kin.

As a youth, the Yakö is initiated into an age-set in his ward of the village and is subject to the discipline which this exercises, independently and on behalf of the senior men of the ward. As he matures and marries he becomes eligible to join one of a number of corporate associations within the ward which exercise jural and ritual powers of various sorts. The ward leaders are senior members of the various patrilineages and matrilineages settled within it. These men

form a group known as the *Yakamban*, which advises the ward head, who represents the senior lineage in the unit, and with him they regulate ward affairs. Most members of the *Yakamban* also belong to a number of other associations, which recruit their membership from the various wards of the village. Each of these village associations has its own distinct membership and functions; and some members of each association will also be found in the senior village association, the *Yabot*, which is the highest ritual and executive body of the village.

The various Yakö villages are each quite independent of one another; but all have this mode of organization. Thus, although Yakö society is stateless or acephalous, it is clear that within their villages, which include populations of more than 13,000, they have achieved a fair degree of centralization. The Yakö polity consists of several types of corporate groups, lineages, age-sets, associations of various sorts at the ward and village level, and also the village and its wards, each of which forms a distinct public regulating certain affairs for its members. These Yakö publics each include one or more officials who act as executive agents of the group, and who also represent it in other units. Thus, while Tallensi derive cohesion from the ritual congregations in which lineages are incorporated as units, Yakö rely on the overlapping representation and membership of their lineage males in a hierarchic series of functionally differentiated associations for such societal co-ordination as they achieve.

4.

With these examples, we can explore certain issues of political theory which are of special interest to anthropologists. These issues include centralization, the nature of political units, and law.

I have argued that it is inadequate to define political organization by such specific criteria as the control of force or maintenance of co-operation; instead I have suggested that we should regard action to regulate public affairs as political. Such regulation either involves the formation of new policy, or implements institutionalized procedures. If we ask what are the usual contents of these procedures and policies, to what do they usually refer, we can derive some general answers from the notion of the public given above. Since public affairs are the subject-matter of politics, the properties of the public, their maintenance or modification, will be the normal objects of political activity. These affairs include the maintenance or modification of the unit's autonomy, of its internal procedures or organization, of its corpus of common affairs, and its identity, boundaries, membership and continuity. With reference to these conditions, the public acts as a unit to regulate its internal organization and its external relations. This is equally true whether we are dealing with municipalities, trade unions, professional associations, universities and other modern corporations, or with the lineages, secret societies, age-sets, or village communities of simpler societies. And because this is so, we must recognize that all units at any level of social organization which have the features of the public outlined above will also have political properties and organization, however rudimentary or insignificant these may seem to an outsider. This is so because all social units assumed to be perpetual and identified by distinct autonomies within given spheres which have the organization necessary to manage these affairs, are units with a public character and capacity. As such they are central to the political alignments of the populations inside and around them.

Of necessity these corporate units are based on particular principles, such as ties of descent, seniority, locality, property, ritual, or occupation, and they are thus defined by rules and traditions which delimit their spheres and modes of action and also establish their organization. By reference to these rules and charters the corporation enjoys sufficient authority and autonomy for the management of its affairs. Its internal organization consists in the distribution of this authority, and relations between its subdivisions represent a balance of obligations and rights. Thus one important principle by which publics are organized to regulate their common affairs is that of authority, which being rule-bound is not really autonomous. The other regulatory capacity is power. Power is the capacity for effective action, beyond the requirements of rules or in the face of opposition. Within any corporation, whether this is a lineage, a village, an association or a municipal government, internal and external issues repeatedly arise to which the corpus of agreed rules and precedents are not fully applicable. In these situations, divergent opinions and interests set up cleavages within the plurality over the appropriate course of action. Such conflicts express the exercise of power and are generally resolved by this means. Likewise, competitions for office or movements to introduce new rules or to modify old procedures and organization, or actions to maintain or change the unit's network of external relations — these are occasions on which public affairs are generally regulated through contests of power. It is therefore useful to distinguish two different modes of regulatory action. We may regard as administration those actions which express authority — that is, public regulatory actions prescribed and bound by rules; and as political, all actions which employ power to pursue courses and goals beyond or against what the rules enjoin. Any public will simultaneously exhibit these political and administrative modes of action, because its framework of rules is at once the source of authority and the subject of change. Thus any public is a unit of political administration; and this means that its form and regulation depend on the interplay of power relations and an authority structure.

Though publics have governmental qualities and organization, this

does not mean that they are all sovereign bodies. It is merely necessary that each public should have a distinct body of exclusive common affairs which it regulates autonomously by procedures that involve simultaneous exercise of authority and power.

In Tallensi society the lineages are governmental units of this sort. Each is identified with a particular locality, certain farmlands, property rights, including rights in its members' persons and rights in certain ritual objects and procedures. Each lineage embodies an authority structure by which its various segments are related, and their separate spheres of action are distinguished; each forms a unit within which cleavages of interest and opinion on internal or external issues mobilize opposing parties, which then compete to regulate these common affairs within the framework of the lineage. In segmentary lineages the opposing parties are typically drawn from different segments of the lineage. If the intensity of the political dissension exceeds the carrying capacity of the common authority structure, the lineage may split into two or more distinct and independent units. Until this occurs, its authority structure will contain the recurrent political cleavages within the lineage. Within as well as between states, the same processes can be observed.

While each Tallensi lineage is a governmental unit, relations between lineages which participate jointly in any common wider public are purely political, that is to say, they are not subject to an inclusive authority structure. Where several lineages are settled close together, the local community is often recognized as an inclusive public within which the peaceful settlement of disputes is required and sacralized by ritual. But at the same time, each lineage within it maintains a number of external ties and alliances through which it participates in a number of differing publics with other lineages settled in other localities. In each of these lineage alliances, the participating lineages acquire new rights and new obligations. The new obligations impose some restrictions on the external autonomy of the member lineages, while the new rights provide them with compensating advantages. Such arrangements are not unlike current relations between states in the European Common Market. However, we cannot regard these interlocking networks of lineage alliances as modes of centralization, even though they constitute the political system, as for instance among the Tallensi, primarily because they lack any corresponding authority structure; each lineage remains the centre of its own network, and is in principle free to alter its alliances. The social structure accordingly represents an interlocking series of sets of lateral ties rather than a pyramid.

Among the Yakö, on the other hand, there is an evident hierarchy with regulatory powers. The different levels of this hierarchy differ in the range of the aggregates they span. As we move from the lineage level to that of the ward and the village, we are also moving through a progressive series of functionally differentiated corpor-

ations, each of which rests on quite distinct bases and exercises a distinct jurisdiction. The most important regulatory associations at the ward and village level forcibly recruit their members from the various lineage groups. They reserve to themselves the right to reject lineage nominees for membership in favour of those they prefer. Clearly, such action by external bodies interferes with lineage autonomy; but the autonomies thus removed from the lineages are transferred to the associations, in which these lineages jointly exercise new regulatory powers through their representatives; so that the resulting co-ordination of inter-lineage relations is proportionate to the reductions in lineage autonomy.

The Yakö hierarchy of associations and offices is imperfect and incomplete; but, being flexible and highly inclusive, it provides for the adequate representation of lineages and ward associations on the various village societies and councils, so that the affairs of the entire village community are handled smoothly and predictably. In contrast, despite their community restraints and external alliances, Tallensi lineages are rather autarchic. For the most part these external ties impose no positive obligations on the lineages they serve to link. Their content is mainly negative. They prohibit violence, adultery, and other common causes of dispute between the ritual partners. They also provide a machinery for mediation when any of the linked lineages has a dispute with some outsider. However, among Yakö the senior associations can impose positive obligations on lineages because they represent the wider community. Moreover, the most senior associations at the village level indirectly impose positive obligations on lower-ranking village and ward associations on similar grounds.

Thus, by comparing Yakö and Tallensi political organization, we can see how the scope and degree of centralization corresponds with the autonomy vested in one or several linked agencies to co-ordinate the affairs of a given aggregate by imposing positive obligations which simultaneously restrict the autonomy of the corporations that constitute it. The new public is accordingly defined by the span of the co-ordinating agency and by the scope of common affairs which are the subject of its positive regulation. Such autonomy as this agency exercises, it initially enjoys at the expense of other corporate forms. At the minimum, it seems prerequisite for centralization that some agency should have the power to forbid the various units subordinate to it to establish independent alliances or hostilities with foreign bodies. This is the structural precondition for the maintenance of internal peace.

Our Yakö and Tallensi examples may also help us to understand the relations between government and law. Anthropologists have been traditionally torn between two apparently exclusive conceptions of law: that which identifies it with 'social control through the systematic application of the force of a politically organized

society'[19] and that which defines law as binding obligations sanctioned by individual reciprocity, mutual dependence, and publicity.[20] Neither of these views adequately represents the essential facts. For example, among the Tallensi, marriages, inheritance and land tenure are normal events regulated by definite rules, the infringement of which gives rise to definite reactions. This is also the case among the Yakö, although the content and sanctions of these rules differ in detail. Both these societies have clear ideas of the difference between legal and illegal practice in these fields. Children born out of wedlock belong to their mother's lineage while those born in wedlock belong to their father's. It is evident that among Yakö and Tallensi, marriage, inheritance, land tenure, and property relations are regulated by bodies of law which although unwritten and unsanctioned by central authorities, are none the less observed and enforced by the political units of these societies. For their formulation and maintenance, such laws depend neither on individual relations and interests, nor on a central organ, but on the jurisdiction of the lineages, to which these affairs directly relate.

When they are localized and exogamous, lineages are simultaneously concerned with the regulation of marriage, inheritance, land and with the persons and property of the members, which constitute the common lineage estate. Being structurally and functionally homologous, each lineage has an identical interest in these respects. Accordingly, all observe and enforce a common body of rules based on their common requirements; and when these rules are infringed, each lineage exercises pressure on the offenders within or outside it to make reparation and restore the rule. Thus in these primitive societies, the rules and procedures of law are corollaries of the corporate organization. Indeed, it is by reference to these jural rights that the autonomy, organization, procedures, affairs, identities and memberships of these various corporations are defined. The authority which these corporations exercise simply expresses the legal validity of their organization.

With royal centralization in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, theories of natural law and the social contract were employed to discredit the legal autonomy and historical priority of these older corporations, so that all should be subordinated to the state. This subordination is now so complete that we find it difficult to see how corporations could provide the framework for substantive and procedural law; but the myth of the state of nature, with its war of all against all, merely asserts the jurists' claim that law could not exist in decentralized societies; it does not substantiate this.

19. Radcliffe-Brown (1952c).
20. Malinowski (1959), p. 55.

5.

In conclusion, it would seem that the anthropological contribution to the study of government is modest, though promising. While we have a reasonable idea of the course of political evolution and a serviceable typology of political organization, both schemes require critical analysis and refinement. Likewise, although we now know how the various types of acephalous society maintain their social order, we need also to re-examine these data critically, and at the same time to re-examine our concepts of political organization and of the significant theoretical issues in political anthropology. On the positive side, we now have a reliable method of field investigation which has already yielded much useful data, and which underlies our main achievements over the past thirty years.